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FLORAL CONTAINER HAVING  
A WATER-IMPERMEABLE EXTERNAL LAYER

RELATED REFERENCES

**[0001]** This application is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/899,397, filed July 5, 2001, entitled "FLORAL CONTAINER HAVING A WATER-IMPERMEABLE EXTERNAL LAYER," which is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/479,526, filed January 7, 2000, entitled "FLORAL CONTAINER HAVING A WATER-IMPERMEABLE EXTERNAL LAYER," now abandoned; which is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/716,768, filed September 23, 1996, entitled "FLORAL CONTAINER HAVING A WATER-IMPERMEABLE EXTERNAL LAYER," now abandoned; which is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/438,856, filed May 10, 1995, entitled "FLORAL CONTAINER HAVING A WATER-IMPERMEABLE EXTERNAL LAYER," now U.S. Patent No. 5,605,012; which is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/415,263, filed April 3, 1995, entitled "FLORAL CONTAINER HAVING A WATER-IMPERMEABLE EXTERNAL LAYER," now U.S. Patent No. 5,515,644; which is a divisional of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/053,062, filed April 26, 1993, entitled "FLORAL CONTAINER HAVING A WATER-IMPERMEABLE EXTERNAL LAYER," now U.S. Patent No. 5,402,599.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

**[0002]** The present invention relates generally to a shaped floral holding material having a water-impermeable external layer and, more particularly, but not by way of limitation, to a foam-type floral holding material having a glazed or lacquered external surface which is substantially impermeable to water.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

**[0003]** Figure 1 is a sectional view of a floral container constructed in accordance with the present invention.

**[0004]** Figure 2 is a sectional view of another floral container.

**[0005]** Figure 3 is a perspective view of the floral container of Figure 2.

**[0006]** Figure 4 is a sectional view of yet another floral container.

**[0007]** Figure 5 is a perspective view of another floral container constructed in accordance with the present invention and having a support mesh.

**[0008]** Figure 6 is a sectional view of another floral container constructed in accordance with the present invention and having an internal cavity.

**[0009]** Figure 7 is a sectional view of the floral container of Figure 6 which additionally has internal support rods.

**[0010]** Figure 8 is a sectional view of the floral container of Figure 6 having a growth medium disposed therein.

**[0011]** Figure 9 is a sectional view of the floral container of Figure 6 having a foam insert disposed therein.

**[0012]** Figure 10 is a sectional view of a floral container constructed in accordance with the present invention having a watering tube.

**[0013]** Figure 11 is a perspective view of a floral container constructed in accordance with the present invention and having a tear strip in the external layer.

**[0014]** Figure 12 is a perspective view of the floral container of Figure 11 after the tear strip has been pulled downward.

- [0015]** Figure 13 is a perspective view of several of the floral containers of Figure 10 attached to a watering system.
- [0016]** Figure 14 is a sectional view of a floral container having a nutrient source.
- [0017]** Figure 15 is a sectional view of another floral container having another nutrient source.
- [0018]** Figure 16 is a sectional view of another floral container having a nutrient source.
- [0019]** Figure 17 is a perspective view of a floral container constructed in the form of a growing tray or block constructed in accordance with the present invention.
- [0020]** Figure 18 is a perspective view of the floral container of Figure 17 after having been subdivided into portions.
- [0021]** Figure 19 is a perspective view of another floral container constructed in accordance with the present invention.
- [0022]** Figure 20 is a perspective view of another floral container constructed in accordance with the present invention.
- [0023]** Figure 21 is a sectional view of a floral container having channels and support rods disposed therein.
- [0024]** Figure 22 is a perspective view of a floral container constructed in accordance with the present invention and covered with a decorative cover.
- [0025]** Figure 23 is a perspective view of a sheet of material.
- [0026]** Figure 24 is a plan view of another sheet of material.
- [0027]** Figure 25 is a sectional view of a floral container of the present invention surrounded and wrapped by a crimped sheet of material.

**[0028]** Figure 26 is a sectional view of another floral container surrounded and wrapped by a crimped sheet of material.

**[0029]** Figure 27 is a plan view of a sheet of material having a bonding material disposed thereupon.

**[0030]** Figure 28 is a sectional view of a floral container wrapped and decorated with the sheet of material of Figure 27.

**[0031]** Figure 29 is a plan view of a sheet of material having another pattern of bonding material disposed thereupon.

**[0032]** Figure 30 is a sectional view of a floral container constructed in accordance with the present invention and wrapped and decorated with the sheet of material of Figure 29.

#### DESCRIPTION

**[0033]** The present invention contemplates a formed floral holding material having a glazed or lacquered outer surface layer which is substantially impermeable to water. In essence, the formed floral holding material acts as its own pot, vase or container for containing floral or botanical elements. The water impermeable external surface eliminates the necessity of placing the formed floral holding material within a separate pot, container or covering for the purpose of retaining water and nutrients within the formed floral material as would otherwise be required.

#### Embodiments of Figures 1-13

**[0034]** Shown in Figure 1 and designated by the general reference number 10 is a floral container. The floral container 10 further comprises a floral holding material 12 having an external surface layer 14. The floral container

10 has an upper end 16 and a lower end 18. The floral container 10 shown in Figure 1 is rectangular shaped, although the floral container 10 may be any shape desired in any particular application, for example spherical, frusto-conical, cylindrical, vase-shaped or other geometric shapes. The floral holding material 12 of the floral container 10 is constructed of a material capable of receiving a portion of a floral grouping 20 and holding or supporting the floral grouping 20 without any pot means such as a separate flower pot for example.

**[0035]** The water-impermeable external surface layer 14 may be comprised of one of any number of commercially available compounds which can be used to coat the external surface of the floral container 10 as long as the lacquer does not result in decomposition of the floral container. For example, the coating may be a commercially available polyurethane-type or polyester isocyanate compound. The coating may be moisture-curable. The impermeable external surface layer 14 may be produced by briefly heating the external layer of the floral container 10 to cause a hardened glazing.

**[0036]** The external surface layer 14 may be undecorated or decorated (not shown). The decorations could be decorations with inks, ribbons, sequins, ceramics, sheets of material, plastic attachments, or any of a number of other decorative features.

**[0037]** The floral holding material 12 may be the type of material commonly referred to in the art as floral foam or Oasis™ or may be soil or artificial soil or other earth composition so long as the material is capable of holding its predetermined shape and capable of receiving and supporting the floral grouping 20 without any additional pot means. In the preferred embodiment, the floral holding material 12 is capable of receiving and holding

an irrigant for supplying the floral grouping 20, or propagule or botanical item disposed therein.

**[0038]** By the term "irrigant" is meant any aqueous solution used to irrigate the propagule or botanical item disposed within the holding material. The irrigant may be tap water or may further comprise water having fertilizers, salts, nutrients, hormones, or other substances dissolved or suspended therein.

**[0039]** As shown in Figure 1, the floral grouping 20 has a stem end 22 and a bloom end 24. A portion of the stem end 22 of the floral grouping 20 is extended into the floral holding material 12. The bloom end 24 of the floral grouping 20 extends a distance above the floral holding material 12.

**[0040]** "Floral grouping" as used herein means a botanical item or propagule and may include other secondary plants and/or natural or synthetic ornamental materials which add to the aesthetics of the overall floral grouping.

**[0041]** The term "botanical item" as used herein means a natural or artificial herbaceous or woody plant, taken singly or in combination. The term "botanical item" also means any portion or portions of natural or artificial herbaceous or woody plants including stems, leaves, flowers, blossoms, buds, blooms, cones, or roots, taken singly or in combination, or in groupings of such portions such as bouquet or floral grouping.

**[0042]** The term "propagule" as used herein means any structure capable of being propagated or acting as an agent of reproduction including seeds, shoots, stems, runners, tubers, plants, leaves, roots or spores.

**[0043]** The external surface layer 14 could be composed of a material which could be permeated or destroyed by activation with a solvent or with microbes able to degrade the layer 14.

**[0044]** As mentioned above, the floral holding material 12, as shown in Figure 1, is generally rectangularly shaped. The floral container 10a shown in Figures 2 and 3 is constructed exactly like the floral container 10 shown in Figure 1 and described in detail before, except the floral container 10a has a generally spherical shape as compared to the rectangular shape shown in Figure 1 with respect to the floral container 10. The floral container 10a is comprised of a formed floral holding material 12a having an external surface layer 14a exactly like the layer 14, an upper end 16a and a lower end 18a. A flat portion may be formed on the lower end 18a of the floral container 10a so that the floral container 10a may be supported more easily on a flat surface such as on a table (not shown) for example.

**[0045]** Shown in Figure 4 is a modified floral container 10b which is constructed exactly like the floral container 10 shown in Figure 1 and described in detail before, except the floral container 10b is in the shape of a solid basket comprising a floral holding material 12b having an external surface layer 14b and with a flat upper end 16b and having a flat lower end 18b for resting on a surface.

**[0046]** Shown in Figure 5 and designated by the general reference numeral 10c is a floral container constructed exactly like the floral holding container 10 shown in Figure 1 and described in detail before, except the floral container 10c has a generally cylindrical shape having an upper end 16c. In addition, beneath the external surface layer 14c which is exactly like layer 14 is a reinforcing structure 26 for providing support and reinforcement of the floral holding material 12c which comprises the bulk of the floral container 10c. In Figure 5 the embodiment is a mesh-like material which may be comprised of fibers or

wire which may be of a plastic, metal or natural or synthetic fibrous composition.

**[0047]** Shown in Figure 6 and designated by the general reference number 10d is a floral container constructed of the same floral holding material and hereby designated as 12d as comprises the container 10 in Figure 1. The floral container 10d has an external surface layer 14d which is exactly like the layer 14 and an inner surface 15d and may have a reinforcing structure (not shown) beneath the external surface layer 14d. The container 10d has a cavity 28 which extends from an opening in the upper end 16d a distance into the floral container 10d thereby forming a hollow area in the container 10d. The hollow floral container 10d may have a frusto-conical shape, or it may be rectangular or cylindrical or another applicable shape.

**[0048]** The floral container 10d may also contain a reinforcing structure such as a mesh (not shown) or one or more bars or rods 30 as indicated in Figure 7 for providing support to the floral holding material 12d.

**[0049]** As shown in Figure 8, the cavity 28 of the floral container 12d may be filled with a growing medium 32. The term "growing medium" used herein means any liquid, solid or gaseous material used for plant growth or for the cultivation of propagules, including organic and inorganic materials such as soil, humus, perlite, vermiculite, sand, water, and including the nutrients, fertilizers or hormones or combinations thereof required by the plants or propagules for growth.

**[0050]** Shown in Figure 9 is a floral container 10d which contains a "nested" floral container 10e having an upper end 16e. The floral container 10e has a shape similar to the shape of the cavity 28 such that the floral container 10e can fit into the cavity 28. The floral container 10e has at least some



portion of its external surface layer 14e which is permeable to water and thus does not comprise a completely water impermeable external surface layer as does the floral container 10d within which floral container 10e is contained. Therefore, water and nutrients are able to flow between the floral holding material 12d of the floral container 10d and the floral holding material 12e of the container 10e. Only a portion of the external surface layer 14e of the floral container 10e may be water permeable, or the entire external surface layer 14e of the floral container 10e may be water permeable. In one embodiment, the floral grouping 20 is placed into the floral container 10e first, then after a period of time, the floral container 10e which contains the floral grouping 20, is inserted into the cavity 28 of the floral container 10d for further disposition.

**[0051]** Water, fertilizer and other nutrients may be supplied to the floral containers 10-10d by their application to the upper surface 16-16d of the floral containers 10-10d. Alternatively, as indicated with floral container 10f having external surface layer 14f and upper end 16f shown in Figure 10, water may be applied through a tube 34 inserted into the floral holding material 12f. The tube 34 has perforations 36 whereby when water is introduced into the tube 34 in direction 38, the water flows through the perforations 36 in direction 40 into the floral holding material 12f. Any of the embodiments 10-10e of the present invention may be adapted with a tube similar to tube 34 for moisture/nutrient application purposes. Alternatively, fertilizers, nutrients or other plant requirements could be impregnated into the holding material thereby eliminating the need for adding fertilizers, nutrients or other requirements via an irrigant.

**[0052]** Shown in Figure 11 and designated by the reference numeral 42 is a system for growing a plurality of botanical items or propagules 20a in a

plurality of floral containers 10f constructed exactly the same as floral containers 10f shown in Figure 10. Each container 10f has a tube 34 which is disposed in the floral holding material 12f of the container 10f. Each tube 34 is connected to a feeder pipe 44 via a feeder line 46. Water, fertilizer, nutrients or other materials are introduced into feeder pipe 44 in direction 47 and the water or other substances flow through the feeder lines 46 in direction 38 into tubes 34, thereby introducing the substances into the floral containers 10f.

**[0053]** Shown in Figure 12 and designated by the general reference number 10g is a floral container having floral holding material 12g therein and constructed exactly the same as the floral container 10f except that the container 10g has a tear strip 48 embedded in the external surface layer 14g. When the tear strip is peeled back in a downward motion, a groove 50 is caused in the external surface layer 14g as shown in Figure 13. The groove 50 serves to expose a portion of the floral holding material 12g wherein the external surface layer 14g which is otherwise exactly like the layer 14 is rendered permeable to water and through which groove 50 water can pass into the floral holding material 12g to provide water or nutrients carried therein to floral grouping held by the floral holding material 12g.

#### Embodiments of Figures 14-16

**[0054]** Shown in Figure 14 and designated by the reference numeral 10h is a floral container constructed exactly like floral container 10d in Figure 6 except floral container 10h has a nutrient source 52 which may be attached to some portion of a floral holding material 12h and preferably attached to an inner surface 15h of the floral holding material 12h.

**[0055]** Alternatively, a nutrient source 52a may be placed in the bottom of the cavity 28 of the floral container 10h as shown in Figure 15 or a nutrient

source 52b may be disposed in an aperture 54 in the floral holding material 12h also as shown in Figure 15. Similarly, the nutrient source 52b may be disposed in an aperture 54 in a solid floral container such as floral container 10f as shown in Figure 16.

#### Embodiments of Figures 17-19

**[0056]** Shown in Figure 17, and designated by the reference numeral 60 is a growing tray composed of a plurality of growing units 62. The growing tray 60 is constructed of the same floral holding material used to construct the floral containers 10-10h as shown in Figures 1-16. The external surface 64 and bottom surface 66 of the growing tray 60 has an external surface layer 68 which is comprised of the same material as the external surface layers 14-14h in Figures 1-16 and is impermeable to water. The upper surface 70 of the growing tray 60 is not covered with a water impermeable layer. The floral holding material 72 which comprises each growing unit 62 of the growing tray 60 may have a series of passageways or channels 74 to facilitate distribution of water, nutrients and fertilizers throughout the floral holding material 72. The growing tray 60 serves as a convenient substrate and growing medium for botanical items or propagules 76.

**[0057]** The growing tray 60 may be shipped to various distributors for further culture, shipping or sales. Alternatively, the growing tray 60 may be subdivided into subportions 62a made up of two or more growing units 62. Similarly, the growing tray 60 may be subdivided into separate individual subunits 62b such as shown in Figure 18. Each subportion 62a or subunit 62b, after separation from the growing tray, has at least one water-permeable surface 78 through which water can pass to reach the botanical item or

propagule 76. An individual subunit 62b can be purchased separately for transplanting elsewhere in another growing medium.

**[0058]** Alternatively, the subunit 62b can be transferred to another growing tray such as the growing tray designated by the reference numeral 80 in Figure 19. Growing tray 80 is exactly the same as growing tray 60 except that it has a plurality of cavities 82 which are sufficiently sized to receive and contain individual subunits 62b. Transfer of the subunit 62b into growing tray 80 allows the botanical item 76 contained therein to continue its growth, perhaps to a larger size, or to a more mature or developed state. Even though the subunit 62b may have a residual water impermeable wall surface, the subunit 62b will have at least a partial water-permeable wall surface 78 as shown in Figure 18. Thus, when a subunit 62b is deposited into an open cavity 82 of the growing tray 80, water can enter the floral holding material 72 of the subunit 62b to support continued growth of the botanical item 76. It will be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art that the growing trays 60 and 80 may be comprised of a variable number of individual subunits or cavities. The growing tray 80 may be provided with passageways or channels 84 similar in nature and function to the channels 74 of growing tray 60. The growing tray 80 may also be subdivided into subportions or subunits exactly the same as growing tray 60 for transplanting exactly the same as subunits 62b.

**[0059]** The growing trays 60 and 80 may be treated with perforations (not shown) which pass through the floral holding material comprising the trays 60 and 80 in such a configuration to facilitate the subdividing of the trays 60 and 80 into subunits and subportions. Subdivision of the trays 60 and 80 may be manual or automatic.

### Embodiments of Figures 20-21

**[0060]** Shown in Figure 20 and designated by the reference numeral 60a is a growing tray in which the watering channels are disposed within the interior of the floral holding material rather than on the upper surface as indicated for growing trays 60 and 80 in Figures 17-19. The growing tray 60a has indentations or holes 88 for receiving propagules. A tube 90 receives water from a water source which may be similar to the water source shown in Figure 11, or which may be a water source supplying the single growing tray 60a. The water introduced through the tube 90 supplies interior passageways within the floral holding material.

**[0061]** Shown in Figure 21 and designated by the reference numeral 60b is an embodiment of a growing tray having a plurality of passageways or channels 92 arranged within the interior of the floral holding material of the tray 60b. The tray 60b is exactly the same as growing tray 60a except growing tray 60b also has reinforcing rods or bars 94 which provide additional support for the growing tray 60b when it is moved. The reinforcing rods 94 may be comprised of paper, wood, plastic, metal or any other natural or synthetic stiffening material. Similarly, the tray may be reinforced with a mesh or net comprised of plastic, wire, rope or other natural or synthetic fibrous or mesh-like material.

### Embodiment of Figure 22

**[0062]** Although the present invention contemplates a floral container having a water impermeable outer surface and thus experiences minimal or no leakage, there may be occasions when it is desired to cover the floral container 10 with a preformed decorative cover 96 as shown in Figure 22. In this case,

the floral container 10 is placed manually or automatically into the decorative cover 96 for display, sale or shipping or for further growth.

**[0063]** The decorative cover 96 may have a bonding material on its inner surface for bonding of the cover to the external surface of the floral container 10. Alternatively, a bonding material may be applied to the outer surface of the floral container 10 for bonding to the inner surface of the decorative cover 96. Alternatively, both the inner surface of the decorative cover 96 and the outer surface of the floral container 10 may have bonding materials applied thereto for causing bonding of the decorative cover 96 to the outer surface of the container 10.

**[0064]** The term "bonding material" as used herein means an adhesive, preferably a pressure sensitive adhesive, or a cohesive. Where the bonding material is a cohesive, a similar cohesive material must be placed on the adjacent surface for bondingly contacting and bondingly engaging with the cohesive material. The term "bonding material" also includes materials which are heat sealable and, in this instance, the adjacent portions of the material must be brought into contact and then heat must be applied to effect the seal. The term "bonding material" as used herein also means a heat sealing lacquer which may be applied to the sheet of material and, in this instance, heat also must be applied to effect the sealing. The term "bonding material" as used herein means any type of material or thing which can be used to effect the bonding or connecting of the two adjacent portions of the material or sheet of material to effect the connection or bonding described herein.

### Embodiments of Figures 23-26

**[0065]** There may be occasions when it is desirable to apply to the floral container not a preformed decorative cover 96 but rather a sheet of material which can be wrapped around the floral container and bound about the floral container.

**[0066]** Shown in Figure 23 and designated by the general reference numeral 110 is a sheet of material constructed in accordance with the present invention. The sheet of material 110 has an upper surface 112, a lower surface 114 and an outer peripheral surface 116.

**[0067]** The sheet of material 110 is constructed from any suitable flexible material that is capable of being wrapped or extended about a floral container (such as floral container 10 as described previously in Figure 1) in the manner described below. Preferably, the sheet of material 110 is constructed of a material selected from a group of materials consisting of paper, metal foil, cloth (natural or synthetic or combinations thereof), denim, burlap, polymer film or cling material or combinations thereof.

**[0068]** The term "polymer film" as used herein means any polymer film. For example, but not by way of limitation, one polymer film is a polypropylene film. Another example of a polymer film, but not by way of limitation, is cellophane.

**[0069]** The sheet of material 110 has a thickness in a range from about 0.1 mils to about 30 mils. Preferably, the sheet of material 110 has a thickness in a range from about 0.1 mils to about 5 mils.

**[0070]** The sheet of material 110 may be any shape and a square shape is shown in Figure 23 only by way of example. The sheet of material may be

a circular sheet of material 110a as shown in Figure 24 or may be rectangular or any other geometric shape such as heart shape, for example.

**[0071]** The sheet of material 110 may be constructed of a single layer of material or a plurality of layers of the same or different types of materials. Any thickness of the sheet of material 110 may be utilized in accordance with the present invention as long as the sheet of material 110 is wrappable about a floral container 10, as described herein. Additionally, an insulating material such as bubble film, preferable as one of two or more layers, can be utilized in order to provide additional protection for the item wrapped therein. The layers of material comprising the sheet of material 110 may be connected together or laminated or may be separate layers.

**[0072]** A decorative pattern, such as a color and/or an embossed pattern, and/or other decorative surface ornamentation may be applied to the upper surface 112 and/or the lower surface 114 of the sheet of material 110 or portions thereof including, but not limited to printed design, coatings, colors, flocking or metallic finishes. The sheet of material 110 also may be totally or partially clear or tinted transparent material.

**[0073]** "Cling Wrap or Material" as used herein means any material which is capable of connecting to the sheet of material and/or itself upon contacting engagement during the wrapping process and is wrappable about an item whereby portions of the cling material contactingly engage and connect to other portions of the wrapping material for generally securing the sheet of material wrapped about at least a portion of the item. This connecting engagement is preferably temporary in that the wrapping material may be easily removed without tearing same, i.e., the cling material "clings" to the wrapping material.



A wrapping material remains securely connected to and about the wrapped item until the wrapping material is torn therefrom.

**[0074]** The cling material is constructed and treated if necessary, from polyethylene such as Cling Wrap made by Glad®, First Brands Corporation, Danbury, Connecticut. The thickness of the cling material will, in part, depend upon the thickness of the sheet of material utilized, i.e., generally, the thicker and therefore heavier sheet of material may require a thicker and therefore stronger cling material. The cling material will range in thickness from less than about 0.2 mils to about 10 mils, and preferably less than about 0.5 mils to about 2.5 mils and most preferably from less than about 0.6 mils to about 2 mils. However, any thickness of cling material may be utilized in accordance with the present invention which permits the cling material to function as described herein.

**[0075]** The sheet of material 110 is disposed adjacent the floral container 10 with the upper surface 112 of the sheet of material 110 being disposed adjacent the external surface layer 14 of the floral container 10. In this position, as shown in Figure 25, the sheet of material 110 is extended about and covers a substantial portion of the floral container 10 leaving the upper end 16 of the floral container 10 substantially uncovered so that a floral grouping 20 contained therein extends outwardly from the upper end 16 of the floral container 10.

**[0076]** In this position, a crimped portion 132 is formed in the sheet of material 110 near the upper end 16 of the floral container 10. The crimped portion 132 is formed by crimping together portions of the sheet of material 110 to form the crimped portion 132. The crimped portion 132 extends a distance inwardly toward a central portion of the floral container 10. The

crimped portion 132 preferably extends circumferentially about the upper end 16 of the floral container 10, although the crimped portion 132 could be formed only in portions of the sheet of material 110 thereby forming circumferentially spaced apart crimped portions if desired in a particular application.

**[0077]** As shown in Figure 25, the crimped portion 132 is formed by placing a band 134 about a portion of the sheet of material 110 with the band 134 gathering or bringing together portions of the sheet of material 110 pulling portions of the sheet of material 110 toward a central portion of the upper end 16 of the floral container 10 to form the crimped portion 132.

**[0078]** The term "band" as used herein means any material which may be secured about an object such as the floral container 10, such bands commonly being referred to as elastic bands or rubber bands and also includes any other type of material such as a string or elastic piece of material, non-elastic piece of material, a round piece of material, a flat piece of material, a ribbon, a piece of paper strip, a piece of plastic strip, a piece of wire, a tie wrap or a twist tie or combinations thereof or any other device capable of gathering the sheet of material 110 to removably or substantially permanently form the crimped portion 132 and secure the crimped portion 132 formed in the sheet of material 110. The band 134 also may include a bow if desired in a particular application.

**[0079]** A portion of the sheet of material 110 near the outer periphery 116 thereof extends a distance above and beyond the crimped portion 132 to form a skirt 136 (Figure 25) extending circumferentially about the upper end 16 of the floral container 10 and circumferentially about the floral grouping 20. The sheet of material 110 secured about the floral container 10 in the manner just described provides a decorative covering 138. The sheet of material 110 and

the floral container 10 together with the means for forming the crimped portion 132 comprise a decorative assembly 140.

**[0080]** In one preferred embodiment, the band 134 is automatically placed about the sheet of material 110 using any one of a number of commercially available automatic or semi automatic banding machines such as the automatic shaping machine Model No. Power 260 available from Clements Industries, Inc., South Hackensack, New Jersey, or the machine Model No. Model BMNS Side Bender available from Saxmayer Corporation, Blissfield, Minnesota (MN), for example. In this last mentioned embodiment, the floral container 10 with the sheet of material 110 extended thereabout is placed in the banding machine and the banding machine is activated to automatically place the band 134 about the sheet of material 110.

**[0081]** A system for automatically placing a band about a sheet of material disposed about a flower pot is disclosed in co-pending application entitled "BAND APPLICATOR FOR APPLYING A BAND ABOUT A SHEET OF MATERIAL AND A POT", U.S. Serial No. 07/934,832, filed August 24, 1992 and assigned to the assignee of the present invention and one disclosure of the letters application specifically is incorporated herein by reference. This system can be utilized for automatically placing the band 134 about the sheet of material 110 in accordance with the present invention.

**[0082]** In one other embodiment, the sheet of material 110 is placed about the floral container 10 and then placed in a holding device of the type disclosed in co-pending patent application entitled "METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR WRAPPING A FLORAL GROUPING WITH WATER HOLDING AND RELEASING MATERIAL", U.S. Serial No. 07/922,293, filed July 30, 1992 and assigned to the assignee of the present invention, the disclosure of which specifically hereby is

incorporated herein by reference. This device includes a band holder. After the floral container 10 with the sheet of material 110 extended thereabout is placed in the holding device, the operator then takes a band from the band holder and pulls it over the holding device and onto the sheet of material 110.

**[0083]** Shown in Figure 26 is a modified floral container 10a exactly the same as the floral container 10 shown in Figure 25 and described in detail before, except the floral container 10a is in the shape of a solid basket.

**[0084]** The sheet of material 110a shown in Figure 24 is disposed or extended about the floral container 10a. A crimped portion 132a is formed in the sheet of material 110a via a band 134a for cooperating to hold the sheet of material 110a in position about the floral container 10a to provide the decorative covering 138a to form the decorative assembly 140a.

#### Embodiment of Figures 27-28

**[0085]** Shown in Figure 27 is a modified sheet of material 110b which is constructed exactly like the sheet of material 110a shown in Figure 24 and described in detail before, except the sheet of material 110b has a closure bonding material 142 (also referred to herein as "bonding material") disposed thereon. More particularly, the closure bonding material 142 is disposed on the upper surface 112b of the sheet of material 110b and the closure bonding material 142 is spaced a distance 144 from the outer periphery 116b of the sheet of material 110b. The closure bonding material 142 extends circumferentially about the sheet of material 110b. The closure bonding material 142 is spaced a distance 145 radially from a central portion of the sheet of material 110b. It should be noted that, although the closure bonding material 142 is shown in Figure 27 in the form of a continuous strip of closure

bonding material 142, the closure bonding material 142 may be in the form of spots or spaced-apart strips and the spots or strips may be of any geometric shape desired in a particular application.

**[0086]** Shown in Figure 28 is a decorative assembly 140b comprising a floral container 10 which is constructed exactly like the floral container 10 shown in Figure 1 and described in detail before.

**[0087]** In operation, the sheet of material 110b is extended about a portion of the external surface 14 of the floral container 10. The crimped portion 132b is formed in the sheet of material 110b by crimping together portions of the sheet of material 110b near the closure bonding material 142 and forming overlapping portions of the sheet of material 110b with the overlapping portions being substantially bonded via the closure bonding material 142 to form the crimped portion 132b. The crimped portion 132b will cooperate to hold the sheet of material 110b about the floral container 10 to provide the decorative covering 138b in a manner exactly like that described before with respect to the crimped portion 132b formed with the band 134 shown in Figure 25, except in this instance the crimped portion 132b is formed by bringing together and bonding portions of the sheet of material 110b via the closure bonding material 142. The closure bonding material 142 is positioned on the upper surface 112b of the sheet of material 110b so that the crimped portion 132b is positioned above the upper end 16 of the floral container 10 as shown in Figure 28.

**[0088]** The crimping of the sheet of material 110b may be accomplished by hand or with a machine or device.

### Embodiment of Figures 29-30

**[0089]** Shown in Figure 29 is a modified sheet of material 110c which is constructed exactly like the sheet of material 110b shown in Figure 27, except the sheet of material 110c also includes a first pot bonding material 146 which extends circumferentially about a portion of the sheet of material 110c. The first pot bonding material 146 is spaced a distance from the closure bonding material 142 and spaced a distance from a central portion of the sheet of material 110c. A closure bonding material 142 is spaced a distance from the outer peripheral edge 116c of the sheet 110c. The sheet of material 110c may also include a second pot bonding material 148 which is disposed on the upper surface 112c of the sheet of material 110c with the second pot bonding material 148 covering a central portion of the sheet of material 110c.

**[0090]** Shown in Figure 30 is a sectional view of a decorative assembly 140c comprising a floral container 10 which is constructed exactly like the floral container 10 shown in Figure 1 and described in detail before. The sheet of material 110c is extended about the floral container 10 and the crimped portion 132c is formed in the sheet of material 110c in a manner exactly like that described before in connection with the sheet of material 110b shown in Figure 28.

**[0091]** The first pot bonding material 146 is disposed on the sheet of material 110c and positioned thereon so that, when the sheet of material 110c is wrapped or extended about the floral container 10, the first pot bonding material 146 is disposed adjacent a portion of the external surface layer 14 near the upper end 16 of the floral container 10. The portion of the sheet of material 110c with the pot bonding material 146 thereon is bondingly connected to the external surface layer 14 of the floral container 10 for further cooperating

to hold the sheet of material 110c extended about the floral container 10. In addition, the second pot bonding material 148, if present, is positioned on the sheet of material 110c so that the second pot bonding material 148 engages a portion of the lower end of the floral container 10 and is bondingly connected thereto for still further cooperating to hold the sheet of material 110c extended about the floral container 10 to form the decorative covering 138c and decorative assembly 140c.

**[0092]** The closure bonding material 142 and the pot bonding materials 146 and 148 may be disposed on the upper surface or the lower surface or both of the sheets of material 110 described herein or in any of the other positions described in the co-pending application entitled "METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR FORMING A DECORATIVE COVER", Attorney Docket No. 8400.883, sent to the PTO on August 5, 1992, Inventor: Donald E. Weder, owned by the Assignee of the present invention, the disclosure of which specifically hereby is incorporated herein by reference.

**[0093]** The present invention in particular is useful for providing a decorative covering using a sheet of material constructed of a material which is non-shape sustaining. "Non-shape sustaining" means that the material may be shaped about the form of the floral container, but the sheet of material will not hold that shape and will relax back into substantially the non-formed shape unless held in the formed shape by some means such as the forming of the crimped portion in the sheet of material. By comparison, a shape sustaining sheet of material would be a material such as a metal foil for example which may be formed about the floral holding material and which will substantially maintain the formed shape.

**[0094]** Changes may be made in the construction and the operation of the various components, elements and assemblies described herein and changes may be made in the steps or the sequence of steps of the methods described herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined in the following claims.